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United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

Offers by Member States of grants and scholarships for higher education, including vocational training, for Palestine refugees

Report of the Secretary-General**

1. The present report is submitted to the General Assembly in pursuance of its resolution 55/126 of 8 December 2000.

2. The report includes the substance of responses from Member States and United Nations agencies to the appeal contained in that resolution, together with reference to further action taken by Member States and United Nations agencies in response to the appeal contained in General Assembly resolutions 32/90 F of 13 December 1977, 33/112 C of 18 December 1978, 34/52 C of 23 November 1979, 35/13 B of 3 November 1980, 36/146 H of 16 December 1981, 37/120 D of 16 December 1982, 38/83 D of 15 December 1983, 39/99 D of 14 December 1984, 40/165 D of 16 December 1985, 41/69 D of 3 December 1986, 42/69 D of 2 December 1987, 43/57 D of 6 December 1988, 44/47 D of 8 December 1989, 45/73 D of 11 December 1990, 46/46 D of 9 December 1991, 47/69 D of 14 December 1992, 48/40 D of 10 December 1993, 49/35 D of 9 December 1994, 50/28 of 6 December 1995, 51/127 of 13 December 1996, 52/60 of 10 December 1997, 53/49 of 3 December 1998, and 54/72 of 6 December 1999. By those resolutions, the Assembly appealed to all States, specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations to augment special allocations for grants and scholarships to Palestine refugees; invited the relevant specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system to continue, within their respective spheres of competence, to extend assistance for higher education to Palestine refugee students; and requested the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to act as the recipient and trustee for such special allocations for grants and scholarships and to award them to qualified refugee candidates.

* A/56/150.

** The late submission of the present document is due to unavoidable circumstances (information provided in accordance with General Assembly resolution 54/248, sect. C, para. 1.)

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3. In fiscal year 2001, the Government of Japan awarded 12 fellowships through UNRWA to Palestine refugees who were employed by UNRWA as vocational training staff at the eight vocational training centres in the UNRWA area of operations. These were processed by the Japan International Cooperation Agency. A review of that programme from its inception in 1985 until 2000 shows that a total of 187 scholarships were offered by the Government of Japan, of which 175 have been processed. In 1989, the Government of Japan contributed $1 million, to be spent over a five-year period, towards the UNRWA university scholarship programme for secondary school graduates. The recipients were Palestine refugee students from the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Between 1993 and 2000, 151 students graduated from the programme in a wide range of specializations, while 10 were still pursuing their university studies in the 2000/2001 academic year and one failed. The Government of Japan contributed an additional $400,000 in 1992, 1993 and 1994, $500,000 in 1995 and $600,000 in 1996 and 1997, to be spent over a five-year period, towards the UNRWA university scholarship programme for secondary school graduates from the UNRWA area of operations. The recipients were Palestine refugee students. In 1998, the Government of Japan contributed $71,000 for the university scholarship programme. That contribution was used in 1998/1999 to cover the awards of 111 continuing students out of the 154 hitherto financed by the UNRWA General Fund budget, the funding of which had been frozen owing to the financial problems faced by UNRWA. Funding of the awards for the remaining 43 students was covered from savings from previous Japanese contributions realized as a consequence of the early graduation of some students and the failure of others. In 1999, owing to the cancellation of the portion of the university scholarship fund that had been financed from the General Fund budget, and the fact that funding from donors to finance the subprogramme was not forthcoming, the UNRWA Education Department used the funds already available from the Japanese contribution to finance the studies of most of the students through their graduation. A total of 284 recipients participated in the programme in the academic year 2000/2001, while 401 students graduated and 13 failed in the period 1995-2000. These awards, while not provided specifically in response to the General Assembly resolution, are in keeping with its spirit and intention.

4. The Government of Switzerland contributed $1,703,581 between 1989 and 1996 and an additional $338,000 in 1997 to the UNRWA scholarship programme for secondary school graduates. Of the 315 students who benefited from part of the 1997 Swiss contribution for one year only, 67 graduated in 1998, 7 failed and 87 were granted scholarships in 1998/1999 from savings realized from previous Swiss contributions, while the remaining 154 continuing students were financed in 1998/1999 from other sources (see para. 3). In 1999, owing to the cancellation of a portion of the university scholarship fund financed from the UNRWA General Fund budget and to the fact that financing was not forthcoming from donors to fund the subprogramme, the UNRWA Education Department used funds already available from the Swiss contribution to finance the graduation of the majority of students. The number of students from the five fields of the UNRWA area of operations in the academic year 2000/2001 was 133, including 19 students who benefited from part of the 1997 Swiss contribution. Between 1993 and 2000, 305 students graduated and five failed.

5. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, as part of its long-standing agreement with UNRWA and within the framework of the regular programme regarding scholarships for Palestinians, granted 78 scholarships in favour of Palestinian students during the biennium 2000/2001.

6. In 2000/2001, the World Health Organization provided a total of 27 fellowships/study tours for qualified Palestinian candidates, nominated by the Palestinian Authority, enrolled in various specializations. Those fellowships/study tours totalled 27 months of study.

7. The United World Colleges have now established their own selection committee in the area and have therefore not offered any scholarships through UNRWA for the 1997/1998 school year. One scholarship was offered in 1998/1999, 1999/2000 and 2000/2001 by Lester B. Pearson College of the Pacific, in Canada, and all three were processed.

8. In July 2000, the International Development Research Centre pledged $1,314,607 to UNRWA to finance the scholarship fund for Palestine refugee women in Lebanon, with an implementation period of six years. In 2000/2001, 25 students were enrolled in seven specializations at various Lebanese universities.